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SEXTONS.

WE are assured, on excellent authority, that there are no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and gravemakers; therefore we need not apologise for introducing the reader into the society of the gentlemen of the mattock, or beat about for excuses to justify us in having our say about sextons.

The old sexton in the *Old Curiosity Shop*, who is ever dwelling upon the uncertainty of life while planning what he will do—next summer, says it is only those who turn up the ground where nothing grows, and everything decays, who read the signs around them rightly. Never was there a greater mistake. Dickens's sexton, moreover, 'drawing one stern moral from his pursuits and everything around him,' is no type of his craft. Shakspeare's merry clown, bandying jokes as he jowls the skulls to the ground, ready alike for a stave or a stoup of liquor, comes much nearer life. 'Hath the fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at gravemaking?' asks Hamlet, when he hears the sexton troling a love-ditty as he plies his spade. 'Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness,' replies Horatio. Just so, familiarity soon breeds insensibility. Your hospital nurse will turn with a jest from laying out a dead patient, your coffin-maker will whistle as he hammers, and your gravedigger sing at his work. If habit did not blunt the sense, and strip such occupations of their sad associations, who would voluntarily follow them? But it is astonishing how quickly a man whose trade depends upon other people's misfortunes, gets to look at those misfortunes entirely from a business point of view. When the Tunbridge sexton was shewing Southey over the church, somebody came in to tell him of a certain townsman's death. 'Is he dead at last? Is he dead at last? Thank God for it! It's the best piece of news I've heard this many a day!' The poet, surprised at this outbreak, inquired why he should rejoice so heartily at the death of the man. 'Why,' was the sexton's answer, 'he has left me five shillings on condition that I bury him in a

particular corner of the churchyard!' And we may be sure the Newcastle sexton looked upon himself as an injured individual, when he recorded of a certain slack week in the summer of 1795—'Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, seven days, and no funerals!'

Sacristan and sexton are reckoned to be synonymous terms; but the modern bell-ringing, grave-digging institution is something very different from the older office, which the sir-priest of a former day did not think unbecoming the dignity of the cloth. By the statutes of the cathedral of Durham, drawn up in the reign of Philip and Mary, it was ordained that the sacristan of the cathedral should be a faithful and industrious person, chosen from among the minor canons. He was to take charge of all the vestments, vessels, and paraphernalia of the church, and see that the linen was kept neat, whole, and clean. He had the care of the school-books, and all those belonging to the cathedral library, and was especially enjoined not to lend any of the latter to any canon or stranger, without obtaining the consent of the dean; even then, he was to insist upon the borrower giving him a note of his name, and that of the book he borrowed, with a written engagement to return it upon a certain day. The duty of providing the wine, wax, and oil required for the uses of the church also fell to the sacrist. He received oblations, kept order during the services, and, furthermore, had to visit the sick, and administer the sacrament when need or time required. To assist him in his multifarious duties, he was allowed two careful honest men as sub-sacrists, to fold the vestments, cover the altar, light the cathedral, and act as vergers generally; and two still humbler assistants to clean the edifice, take care of the clock, ring the bells, dig the graves, and see to the opening of the cathedral doors before six o'clock in the morning, and to the closing of them at curfew. The sacristan was paid a salary of eight pounds a year, besides being found in vestments and commons.

In Peterborough Cathedral may be seen the

counterfeit presentment of a sturdily-built, self-satisfied-looking little man, clad in a red jacket, trunk hose, and blue stockings; his head crowned with a red cap, and his feet encased in black shoes, tied with smart blue ribbons. One would scarcely guess his office by his costume, did not his keys, his mattock and spade, his whip—once dreaded by obtrusive boys and intrusive curs—emphatically bespeak his calling. Few of his fraternity have attained even local fame, but Robert Scarlett, whose portrait still holds its pride of place, may be considered an historical character. He missed being a centenarian by just a couple of years, but followed his vocation long enough to bury two generations of his fellow-townsmen, while it was his fortune to perform the last sad office for two famous queens. In 1535, Scarlett plied his tools in behalf of the ill-used Catherine, the first and noblest of the many consorts of Henry VIII., and in 1587 dug the grave of the yet worse-fated Mary Queen of Scots. Beneath the portrait of the old sexton stand these lines by way of epitaph:

You see old Scarlett's picture stand on hie;
But at your feet here doth his body lye.
His gravestone doth his age and death-time shew,
His office by his token [s] you may know.
Second to none for strength and sturdy lymam,
A sear-babe mighty voice, with visage grim;
He had interd two queenes within this place,
And this townes householders in his life's space
Twice over, but at length his own time came,
What he for others did, for him the same
Was done: no doubt his soule doth live for aye
In heaven, though here his body clad in clay.

When his turn came, we are told by a square stone inscribed July 2, 1591, *R. S., ætatis 98*.

A wielder of the spade, a female one too, is one of the few notabilities of which Kingston-on-Thames can boast. Hester Hammerton, daughter of Abraham Hammerton, sometime sexton of the parish, was a woman of robust frame and strong constitution, who occasionally assisted her father in his churchyard duties. In the year 1730, she was thus employed when an accident happened, of which Dr Rawlinson gives the following account in a letter to a friend: 'On Monday last, our sexton, with his son and daughter, being employed in digging a grave, part of the ancient chapel of St Mary fell in upon them, killed the sexton and one other man on the spot, and buried in the grave both the son and daughter for above three hours, during which time many were employed in digging out the rubbish, in order to get at the bodies that were buried. After the removal of the timbers, and several loads of rubbish, they heard very plainly some loud groans and cries in the grave. Soon after, they came to the heads of two persons: the man was speechless and almost dead, the woman was not so much pressed; but being immediately taken care of by Dr Crammer, they are both in a fair way of recovery.' They owed their lives to a part of one of the columns having fallen over the grave, and the column is still preserved in the church as a memorial of the event.

One might have supposed the strong-minded damsel would have had enough of grave-digging; but as soon as Hester had recovered from the effects of the accident, she accepted the offer of succeeding

her father, was formally inducted into the office, and for sixteen years she rang the great bell, and dug all the graves in the parish churchyard. Her official costume consisted of a man's waistcoat and hat, a long loose gown, and a silk neckerchief; but on Sundays and holidays she arrayed herself in a gown of the latest fashion, donned a mob-cap with frilled border and gay ribbons, and carried a nosegay in her bosom. Feminine occupations this stalwart maiden disliked and despised, while skating, cricket, football, and other manly sports were her delight. Partial to convivial parties, she contributed her share of the singing, and enjoyed her share of the feasting, drinking, and smoking; but if any one presumed to insult her, or made more free than propriety allowed, her fists were ready and apt to inflict summary chastisement. One Sunday afternoon, going to the church to ring the bell for afternoon service, Hester espied two men busily engaged ripping the fringe and gold-lace off the pulpit hangings. Seizing one by the collar, she threw him over the reading-desk into a pew below, but had no sooner done so than she was felled by a blow from his companion, and by the time she recovered herself, the precious pair had disappeared: they were, however, caught soon afterwards, and hanged in the market-place. Hester Hammerton died on the 28th of February 1746, at the age of thirty-five, and was buried in the churchyard in which she had laboured so long. We must not assume that Hester Hammerton's early death arose from the unfitness of one of her sex to cope with the duties of her office, for Mrs Mary Hall, who filled the same place in York some century ago, attained the age of a hundred and five, and was able to see and hear, talk and walk, to the last, the stout old dame not taking to her bed till within two days of her death.

Incongruous as the association of the sex with the sextonship seems, female sextons were and are by no means uncommon—especially in London churches in which the burial-service has long ceased to be heard. In the reign of George II., the question of the legal eligibility of females to serve the office was raised and settled. A vacancy occurring in the sextonship of St Botolph, Aldersgate, two candidates solicited the votes of the parishioners—a man named Olive, and a woman named Sarah Bly. The latter polled two hundred and nine votes to her opponent's hundred and ninety-six, forty female householders voting for the representative of their sex. Not satisfied with this result, Olive went to law, and the judges had to decide upon two points—firstly, whether a woman could be elected sexton; and secondly, whether women could take part in the election. That women had held offices of greater consequence, was a fact not to be gainsayed—one lady having officiated as workhouse governor, another as keeper of the Gatehouse, a Lady Packington had served as returning-officer, and the famous Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery sat on the assize bench as hereditary sheriff of Westmoreland. With these precedents in favour of feminine capacity before them, the court decided against Olive on the first point; and for the second, held that, as the office did not concern the public, or the care and inspection of the morals of the parishioners, there was no reason to exclude women from voting at such elections, providing they paid church and poor rates.

The father of the sextoness of Kingston-on-Thames

was not the only one of his fraternity to whom working for the dead proved fatal. In 1765, the sexton of St Andrews, Newcastle, was found dead in a grave he had been digging. Three years afterwards, the sexton of St Catharine Cree, in the City of London, laid a wager that he would dig a certain grave ten feet deep; he won the wager, but just as he completed his task, some of the soil he had thrown out fell back into the grave, filling it up again to his middle. Some lookers-on rushed to his rescue, and in their eagerness brought down a second mass of mould, which smothered the unlucky official. A similar fate was the lot of the sexton of Newington in 1804, who was buried alive just as the funeral-procession for which he was waiting entered the churchyard.

If the sexton was liable to peculiar dangers, he was also beset with peculiar temptation, leading him to test the truth of the proverbial saying, that dead men tell no tales. A monumental brass in the church of St Decumans, near Watchett, Somersetshire, records how the lady it commemorates was brought back to life and the world by the ruthless knife of the sacrilegious sexton, who, in attempting to remove a ring from the finger of the supposed defunct, awoke her from her trance. We have no right to impugn the truth of the record; but it is singular that the self-same legend, with variations, should exist in Gloucestershire, in Halifax, and Drogheda, as well as in three different towns in Germany—a circumstance, at anyrate, eloquent enough as to the estimation in which the pliers of mattock and spade were popularly held. It is certain that with them originated the horrible offence of body-snatching; for the first indictment for that crime was laid in 1777 against the sexton and assistant-sextion of St George's, Bloomsbury, who were fairly caught in the act of carrying away the body of a lady. The wretches were found guilty, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, and a whipping from Kingsgate Street to Dyott Street (a distance of half a mile); but this well-merited item was afterwards remitted. As some slight set-off to these delinquencies, fate made a sexton the instrument of bringing a foul criminal to justice. One day, Dr Airy, passing through St Sepulchre's Churchyard, stopped to watch the gravedigger at his work. Presently he was astonished to notice that a skull thrown out of the grave seemed endowed with a power of motion. Taking it up, the cause of progression was found to be a large toad; but while the skull was in his hand, the doctor made another and more exciting discovery—embedded in the temple-bone was a tenpenny nail! He drew the gravedigger's attention to the extraordinary fact, and departed. The sexton turned the matter in his mind; he knew the skull was that of a man who had died suddenly twenty-two years before, and gradually memory brought back certain floating rumours of the time. Putting this and that together, he became something more than suspicious, and lost no time in consulting a magistrate. The widow of the long-buried man was arrested, and taxed with having murdered her husband; she confessed her guilt, and was duly hanged for the crime, so long hidden, and so strangely brought to light.

The sexton's lot is certainly no very enviable one; it would be less desirable still if the melancholy monotony of delving in the churchyard were not broken by the duties of the belfry. Those, at least, are not always of the same sad complexion—

there are marriage-bells as well as death-knells to be rung—

To call the folk to church in time,
We chime;
When joy and mirth are on the wing,
We ring;
When we mourn a departed soul,
We toll.

Ringin', tollin', and chimin' form the three variations of the bellman's vocation. In ringin', he swings the bell round; in tollin', he swings it just enough to allow of the clapper striking the bell's side, the solemn sound peculiar to the knell being imparted by setting the bell at every pull; chimin' is merely tollin' the bells in harmony. The ordinary bell-duties of the sexton consist in ringin' the people to church, tollin' for a funeral, and ringin' the passing bell. In the seventh year of Elizabeth's reign, it was ordered that, 'when any Christian body is in passing, the bell be tolled, and that the curate be specially called for to comfort the sick person; and after the time of his passing, to ring no more but one short peal; and one before the burial, and another short peal after the burial.' It was a popular belief that the soul never left the body till the church-bell had been rung. The usual method of ringin' the passing bell is, we believe, to toll quickly for a few minutes, and then give a certain number of knells—three for a child, six for a woman, and nine for a man; sometimes finishing with as many strokes as the departed has numbered years.

The authorities of a town used to be fined at one time if the church bells were not set going upon the arrival of the king or queen. The bell was rung, too, in cases of fire or public commotion; and in old times the sexton sought to drive away storms and tempests by ringin' the bell vigorously, and so frightening the evil spirits who stirred up angry weather. With so many demands upon them, it is perhaps not to be wondered at that lazy sextons attached the rope to the clapper, and eased their labour at the risk of crackin' the bell. The churchwardens of St Lawrence, Reading, in 1594, made an entry in the parish books anent this evil practice—'Whereas there was through the slothfulness of the sexton in times past a kind of toling ye bell by ye clapper rope; yt was now forbidden and taken away; and that ye bell should be toled as in times past, and not in any such idle sorte.' We suspect the churchwardens interfered too late to prevent mischief, for by another entry we see they were compelled to have their great bell, 'Harry Kelsall,' recast soon afterwards. It had probably, like many a good bell, been cracked in tollin' it by the clapper.

When 'execution-day' was a weekly Newgate institution, the sexton of St Sepulchre's used to go to the prison at midnight and exhort the unhappy inmates in the following fashion:

'You prisoners that are within,
Who for wickedness and sin,

after many mercies shewn you, are now appointed to die to-morrow in the forenoon, give ear and understand, that to-morrow mornin' the greatest bell of St Sepulchre's shall toll for you in form of, and manner of a passing bell, as used to be tolled for those that were at the point of death; to the end that all godly people hearing that bell, and knowin' it is for your going to your deaths, may be stirred up heartily to pray to God to bestow his

grace and mercy upon you whilst you live!' As the carts passed the church, the great bell was tolled, and the sexton again exhorted the criminals to repentance. For these services he received twenty-six shillings and eightpence, derived from a legacy left to the parish, for the express purpose, by one Robert Dove or Dowe.

Some of the old parish account-books contain curious entries relating to our subject. In 1531, the sexton of Louth received twelpence for burying three poor folks. At Gateshead, in 1649, the sexton was paid sixpence for a grave for a witch; the functionary at Hammersmith getting a like fee for a child that was born in a field, and half-a-crown for burying 'a poor man out of the cage.' In 1665, the parish of Uttroter paid four shillings for providing a shirt, making a grave, and finding beer for the burial of 'the soldier that was slain in the streets.' These payments are commonplace, however, beside one made by the authorities of Louth in 1556, when they handed over fourpence to John the bellman 'for ceweryng Robert Marshall's wyffe gret toe.' What was the matter with the lady's toe, how the sexton came to cure it, and why Robert Marshall left the parish to pay for his wife's gret toe, are mysteries the parish records leave unsolved.

Twelve years ago, a Derbyshire newspaper, in recording the death of Peter Bramwell, the sexton of Chapel-en-le-Frith, commented upon the long and unbroken succession his family had enjoyed, the office having been filled by his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather during a period of two hundred and twenty-three years—giving an average of above forty-four years' possession to each. It might be difficult to match this so far as regards the average, but the family succession itself might probably be paralleled, if not surpassed; for in many parts of England the sextonship is, to all intents and purposes, hereditary. Local customs rule supreme in the matter. In some places, the sexton only holds office at the pleasure of the parishioners, but usually the appointment is a life-appointment, the office being a freehold one, not subject to ecclesiastical deprivation. Where custom does not vest the election in the hands of the ratepayers, the law holds the right of choice to rest with the minister of the parish.

ONE OF THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER V.—MR MURPHY'S FISHING, AND WHAT HE CAUGHT.

THE thunder-storm seen from the windows of Dew-bank Hall, raged up at the Survey station with terrific violence; and when it was over, Mr Murphy found his sketch-book, which, with characteristic carelessness, he had left outside the hut, reduced to its primary element of pulp. Further pursuit of his profession being therefore out of the question for that morning, and the time hanging very heavy on his hands, as it is apt to do with those who get up at sunrise, the painter strolled down the mountain, intending to go down to Sandalthwaite, and take his mid-day meal with Mr Woodford. Not that that gentleman deserved the reputation of hospitality any more than those Scotch lairds and others who often acquire it on the same easy terms, but simply that, living in so out-of-the-way and retired a spot, he was thankful enough to get anybody of intelligence to talk to, and more especially

one like Mr Murphy, who was 'such good company' to all he met. But that gentleman-artist being, like too many of his class, of a vacillating disposition, and liable to be decoyed from even such a set purpose as luncheon by the least temptation, was delayed, in a certain blind valley, for hours by the sport of trout-fishing. It is true that he had neither rod, nor line, nor flies, nor did he understand the art of 'tickling'; but he was accustomed to be observant of details, and his eye having lit upon a certain pool, in which a number of fish were waiting for the water to rise sufficiently high to tide them over a natural bar at its mouth, he made up his mind to capture them. The drought had been so long continued, that the beck upon whose bank he stood had been almost dry until that morning, save for a few deep pools, out of some of which this shoal of speckled enthusiasts had doubtless been enticed by the rush of water. Now, it was not perhaps a sportsmanlike idea, but Mr Murphy bethought him that if he could divert the course of the stream just above this natural 'preserve,' or stew-pond, its contents would be left at his mercy in their comparatively shallow bed. He was one of those men who continue to take delight in their school-boy pleasures (but without by any means neglecting the opportunities of manhood) as long as they live, and he was hugely pleased with what he was about. Moreover, the locality was a charming one: the valley looked as fresh and green as though it had just left the hands of its Creator; it was quite shut in by hills, save on the east, where it narrowed into a little wood, through which the stream ran roaring like a child that has lost its way; the beck itself had worn its bed so deep that in places it formed quite a ravine, and here and there among the shining stones there grew a sapling, though the dry rocks overhead were clothed only with the purple heather.

Mr Murphy having finished his engineering operations, took off his shoes and stockings, and tucking up his trousers, began cautiously to wade into the pool. It is difficult to judge of the depth of water until you are in it—it being much like a lawsuit in that respect—and reef after reef of his unmentionables had to be taken up until they were far above his knees. Then, indeed, he reached the fish, which, darting hither and thither like streaks of light, would perhaps have eluded him after all, but for the excess of their terror, which caused them to leap out upon the land itself, and become his prey.

'Out of the frying-pan into the fire,' observed Mr Murphy, smiling grimly to himself. 'I think these must be female trout; that is just the line which women take when they fancy themselves in danger.' But he forgot to reflect, when he grew tired of the sport, and the poor little creatures lay gasping and dying on the bank, in faded beauty, that he himself was behaving very like a man.

As he sat barelegged among his spoils, with a short black pipe in his mouth, he suddenly became aware of the long and angular shadow of Miss Selina Woodford projecting itself into the pool from behind him. 'My dear madam,' exclaimed he, without so much as turning his head, 'if you have come hither in the interests of fish-preserving, I beg to state that these trout have committed suicide. I must do you the justice to say, however, that I have never before known you to be your brother's keeper.'

'No, Mr Murphy,' replied the lady, unconscious

of the sarcasm; 'though I am sure if I were, you would be very welcome to all the fish in Sandal-thwaite. What a naughty man you were not to come to luncheon! I—that is, my brother—quite expected you, I do assure you. It is not complimentary to prefer such sport as this to our company, I think. When I first caught sight of you, I really didn't know what you were about; I hesitated to leave yonder wood; I thought you might be'—Here the mature but modest maiden began to hesitate, and a blush to mantle on her cheek, as though the saffron-flower should become a poppy.

'Thought I was bathing, Miss Selina, did you! You were afraid of horns growing out of your forehead, as in poor Actæon's case, eh? Well, I never heard of that misfortune occurring to a lady.'

Mr Murphy's observations were impudent, to say the least of them, and his manner was quite in keeping with his words: a contemptuous coolness characterised his tones, and his lip wore a mocking smile; but the contempt only was for the lady; the bitterness was evoked by his own distrust of himself. He knew that he might be the husband of Miss Selina for the asking, or rather for the answering, since it had been leap-year with her from the first day of their acquaintance; he was poor, he was in debt, and she had four thousand pounds of her own. On the other hand, he had been his own master all his life; Bohemianism had become his second nature, and the prospect of matrimony with such an individual was not alluring. How plain she was; how jealous she would be! Mr Murphy was not deterred by feelings of morbid delicacy from setting before his own mind the *pros* and *cons* of the whole matter fully. Nor was Miss Selina, I think, altogether unaware of his misgivings, as she was certainly not unconscious of his slights. She bided her time in patience, like a ship's captain with a refractory crew, who in harbour uses blandishments, lest they shall desert, but inwardly resolves to pay them out for it with the cat-o'-nine-tails when he shall once get his ship into blue water.

'Mr Murphy—Claude,' said Miss Woodford, earnestly, laying her hand upon his shoulder, and keeping it there in spite of his struggles—'I have got some news to tell you of a very important character.'

'I know it,' said Mr Murphy coolly. 'Old Mr Wilson is going to be married. Stupid old fool!'

'Very indiscreet, I think, truly, considering the bride is such a chit of a girl,' returned Selina gravely.

'Well, I am not sure that Youth is so very much against a woman, Miss Woodford; I think one forgives it in a wife, as easily as most things.'

The yellow face was shot with red; the colourless eyes gave a dull gleam like a phosphorus match in damp weather; but Miss Selina kept her temper; nay, she had even self-control enough to improve the occasion to her own advantage.

'The great mistake of the affair seems to me, Claude, to be the disproportion between the ages of husband and wife. Depend upon it, the happiest marriages are between persons nearly of an age.'

The unfortunate Mr Murphy passed his handkerchief across his face, and expelled his breath in puffs: his position was doubtless embarrassing, with the lady's fingers firmly clutching his shoulder, while she gave utterance to an opinion so significant.

'But the news I have got to tell you, my dear friend, is not connected with Mr Wilson at all; it

is a matter much nearer home. My nephew, Charles'—

'Now, I don't want to hear anything more against that poor devil,' interrupted the painter with irritation. 'I think, Miss Selina, you behaved unkindly to the lad, and what is worse, you persuaded me to do the same. When I spoke to his uncle in favour of his seeing more of the world, I did not imagine I was urging that he should be packed off to South America. When George Adams was speaking of it this morning—for it's the talk of the whole district—I felt quite ashamed of myself for the part I took in that affair, I did indeed.'

'Nobody can be more sorry for the event than I am,' said Miss Selina stiffly. 'Of course, if I had dreamed of what was to come of it, I should have said: "Keep him at home;" not, I own, for his own sake, but from mere selfish motives, since now this has happened to him, people will be sure to say: "See how that Miss Woodford has profited by her nephew's death, and become the greatest heiress in the county;" although, in reality, I am sure I have nothing to reproach myself with—nothing.'

'Is your nephew dead, then?' exclaimed the painter, hastily stepping back, and involuntarily brushing the shoulder on which his companion's hand had rested, as though it had left some blemish.

'Yes, Claude, the poor boy is drowned. While on a pleasure-cruise outside the harbour at Rio, he fell overboard.'

'And his "little wife"—poor child—how does she take it?' asked Mr Murphy pityingly. 'It must be a sad blow to his cousin Evelyn.'

'Yes, doubtless; but children soon get over those things. Besides, I have been giving her some good advice. Pray, don't encourage her to think about him. How is she to get through life, if she takes everything to heart in this manner?'

'True,' said Mr Murphy dreamily: 'the less heart we have, the lighter we ride on the waves of this troublesome world.'

'Don't say that, Claude,' remonstrated Miss Selina insinuatingly; 'for without heart, how can we love? That is the great fear which I now entertain for myself, lest, being thus placed by Providence in so great a position—I speak of course in a worldly sense—prosperity should dull my affections, and render me incapable of—the emotions that beautify our nature.'

'Such an apprehension does honour to you, dear Miss Selina,' said the painter gravely. 'But the temptations of which you speak are not likely to assail you, I suppose, immediately.'

'I trust not, indeed,' ejaculated the lady piously. 'But life is uncertain, you know, Claude; and once more she placed her bony fingers upon his coat-sleeve. Mr Murphy gave a little shiver, like one who, having parted with his garments, one by one, contemplates the perhaps advantageous but certainly frigid stream into which he is about to plunge. 'And between ourselves,' continued she confidentially, 'I have seen with pain a great alteration of late in dear Ernest's health. You are not aware how he has been tried by domestic calamity, the recollection of which preys upon his mind, and has, I am sure, affected his constitution. You have, however, doubtless observed him to be rather irritable at times; well, you must not be hard upon my poor brother. He is not physically the man he was; and though still in the prime of life—not ten years older than myself indeed—I am often in the greatest anxiety

concerning him. He is not unaware of his own precarious state, poor fellow. This loss of his nephew has quite unmanned him; and if you could have only heard him say this morning, in a voice broken by emotion: "You are now the heiress-presumptive of Dewbank Hall, Selina; but it will not be presumptive long" (evidently alluding to his own decease), I am sure it would have touched a feeling heart like yours, Claude."

Even the recital of this affecting incident seemed to touch Mr Murphy, for he took Miss Selina's disengaged hand, and squeezed it hard.

"Don't cry, Selina, don't cry," said he, which was the more considerate of him, since, except to the eye of love, not a tear was visible upon his companion's cheek.

"I can't help it," sobbed the maiden, hiding her face, for the want of a pocket-handkerchief, upon his shoulder: "it is very, very hard to have to bear all these troubles alone."

"Oh, my Jove!" groaned Mr Murphy to himself, well knowing that the moment was supreme; but to her he sympathisingly murmured: "Oh, my love!"

"Yes, grief will have way," quoted Miss Selina, affecting not to hear him, "and the fast-falling tear"—I forget the rest of it, Claude, dear; but you, who know all the poets by heart, can tell me."

"Shall be mingled with deep execrations on those Who could bask in that spirit's meridian career,
And yet leave it thus lonely and dark at its close,"

continued Mr Murphy, shutting his eyes, for fear their humorous twinkle should be seen.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Selina, who, belonging to that numerous class who look upon all poetry as equally inappropriate to the affairs of human life, perceived no particular want of congruity in the quotation.

"If you were not so rich," said Mr Murphy tenderly, "or if I were not so poor, I might ask you a question. Can you guess what it is?"

"Not I," returned Miss Selina with innocent gaiety. "Is it a riddle? Pretty little twinkling star, how I wonder what you are;" that used to be my favourite verse when I was a child. I always doted on riddles."

"It is not exactly a riddle, Selina; but if you were to say 'Yes' in answer to it, it would become a rebus, for I should kiss you, and you would kiss me again."

Miss Selina gave a tiny scream, such as you might have heard at the distance of a foot and a half, and thought it was a field-mouse. But the Ravisher would not be denied. He selected a spot upon her blushing cheek—in fact, a freckle—and pressed his lips to it with the same gentle force that we use to affix a Queen's-head stamp.

"Dearest Claude," murmured she, "how could you?"

"Dearest Selina," returned he, "how could I help it?"

And this excuse justly being deemed unanswerable, she forgave him, without even exacting a promise that he would never so offend again.

CHAPTER VI.—THE WRESTLERS.

"Bonnie Kendal, Bonnie Langdale, Bonnie Westdale, Bonnie Ambleside," are sounds which the hills about Sandalthwaite have not been wearied

of repeating this whole July afternoon. They are the cries with which the spectators round the Wrestling Ring strive to encourage their different champions, just as on the banks of Cam or Isis the contending crews are exhorted by the men of their own college to do their best in "Pull it out, John's;" "Now you're gaining, Christ Church." This enthusiasm is the nearest approach to patriotism—notwithstanding its somewhat parochial character—that has commonly the opportunity of expression, and moves men's minds to an extraordinary degree. The arrangements are of the simplest kind. The names of the combatants are drawn at hazard, two at a time, by village children. If two men of the same hamlet are thus drawn, the less skilful will often succumb to the other without a trial—"lie down," as it is called—whereby his opponent having purchased his victory thus cheaply, is all the more formidable an antagonist to those who, wearied with other struggles, will presently have to meet him, when the contest grows more select. And again, if a novice find himself fated to contend with a very good man, he will decline the honour from more prudent motives.

George Adams, being a total stranger, was not, of course, influenced by considerations of local advantage, and had never been known to "lie down" to any man, even in his least experienced days; while in the short twelvemonth which he had passed among the hills and meres, he had become quite an adept in this manly art. At a mere district meeting, therefore, such as the present, he was not without a chance of winning at least some of those prizes which would be awarded to the six last "standers," and, as we have seen, in his own secret heart, he cherished hopes of the champion's belt itself—that is, the belt of the light weights. That of the "heavies" was to be awarded on the morrow, and many of those who were entered for it, were now regarding the less ambitious contest among the "boys." There were also ancient heroes, chiefs before the Agamemmons of that day, whose years of battle were over, but who still took infinite interest in the proceedings, although they protested that felling was not what it used to be in their time.

Mr Claude Murphy—who has come hither partly to see his friend George Adams wrestle, and partly for the study of the human form divine which the sport affords him, and principally for the good-fellowship that is to be gleaned at such places—is standing next to one of these Nestors of the ring, and as he listens to his praises of the past, exchanges amused glances with a third person, in a suit of rusty black, and with a neckerchief which was white, I suppose, when it was first put on, but which sadly needs soap and water. This is Mr Herbert Warton, the Sandalthwaite doctor, a man of many inches, and with eyes that would be very keen but for a certain filminess, such as is often seen in those who indulge too much in spirituous liquors. "So the art is lost, John, is it, since your time," observes he to the old statesman, as the small farmers are called in those parts, "and there is now no such thing as 'fair felling'?"

"I did not say that, doctor—although it is certain you do not see the 'swinging hype'" so often as you used to do—but there was a time when the wrestling ring never held a rogue. Now the lads look to the money, ay, and will take the money too, in preference to gaining that which should be their greatest pride. If you'll come to my house

yonder, after this—but you've been there a dozen times; I was forgetting—but if Mr Murphy will, I can shew him five-and-forty belts, not one of which would I sell for its weight in— Well, you may laugh, gentlemen, but at least I would not part with them for a trifle. As for "lying down" to a man for money, I don't know, for my part, how such a thing can ever come about; how one can judge another to be such a scoundrel as to venture upon any such offer; and yet they do it, some of these fine fellows. Yah!

It would have been hard to match this last ejaculation of the honest dalesman among all the synonyms for contempt; and when he had uttered it, as if suiting his action to his word, he spat upon the ground. 'Yet all that our friend means,' observed the doctor to Mr Murphy, smiling, 'is that one man of those who wrestle to-day has been accused of the meanness he describes. Miles Ripson, yonder—"Talk of the devil," you see he's in the next pair—is said to prefer pudding to praise, and would rather have money in his pocket, notwithstanding "there is nothing like leather," than any belt in the North around his middle, except perhaps the Newcastle one, which has the silver towers.—There, you see, he's got his ticket for nothing; Lile Jemmy has laid down to him, and small blame to the little fellow; for Miles is a good wrestler, there's no denying, and as like to be king as any man under eleven stone.'

'That's what makes it so much worse,' growled the ancient athlete. 'Heaven didn't give him those thews and sinews to win his bread in that underhand fashion. Did you ever see such muscles for a young un?'

Miles had stripped himself to his drawers and flannel waistcoat, in preparation for the contest which was fated not to come off, and a magnificent model of strength and suppleness he looked. His features, too, were very handsome, although much paler than those of the majority of the competitors. This was doubtless owing to the nature of his trade, which caused him to pass his days under ground in the Wadhole, an employment entirely of his own seeking, since his old mother, the village post-mistress, would gladly have resigned her office to her son; but such a responsible position was not to Miles's taste, although it was said he condescended to share with her the emoluments thereof. In spite of her entreaties, he had taken to working in the lead-mine, the consequences of which, as we have said, were already to be seen in his handsome face, the pallor of which was increased by contrast with his hair and eyes, which were jet black.

'What a bad expression the young fellow has!' observed Mr Murphy, 'although he is so handsome. I remember seeing him thrown, when I was up here last summer, by—by quite a boy; and when he rose from the ground, he might have served as a model for Satan. Indeed, I thought of transferring him to canvas, only that the fellow was as extortionate in his demands as though he had been the devil himself.'

'Yes, I remember that,' rejoined the doctor thoughtfully. 'It was poor Charles Woodford who threw him: he was but sixteen years old at the time; and doubtless Miles was unlucky, but he never forgave the lad. I daresay he was glad enough to hear the news at the Hall this afternoon. Poor boy, poor boy! If Miles would have done for your devil, I am sure Charlie might have stood

for your Archangel Michael. What pluck there was in that mere child!'

Mr Murphy did not speak; his attention, like that of the old wrestler, seemed to be entirely taken up in the proceedings in the ring; but the doctor noticed a red spot upon each of his cheeks. 'He don't like the subject,' murmured he to himself. 'I wonder whether Miss Selina has become more attractive to him since post-time this morning: he surely never can marry her, after the things he has said of her to me. And yet, what won't a man do for money—or at least for what money gets?' Here Mr Warton knit his brows, although unconsciously, and his red face grew a shade nearer to purple. He was thinking of what he would do, or perhaps had done, for money, himself. There are men who often fall into such reveries without the least regard to the business that may be taking place about them: at church, or at the play; at the grave's mouth, while they are watching the coffin of some dear one descend into the mocking void for ever; nay, in the very ball-room, while the dancers are whirling past to the merry music, their thoughts will play the truant. In vain for Herbert Warton the lake lay sparkling in the evening sun, and the footbridge, with its wooden arches, crossed its junction with the little river, making the prettiest foreground in the world; in vain the mountains closed around the scene their giant arms. He beheld it all as plainly as Claude Murphy did, but he might just as well have been blind, for any knowledge that he had of their existence. In vain the wrestlers came and went, and strove and fell, and the great throng around them kept an anxious silence, or burst forth into loud acclaim: he saw and heard as plainly as the old athlete by his side, but his mind was far away; the scenes of a wasted youth were hurrying across his brain; the disappointments of his manhood; the records of that weakness which had wrought his ruin; the knowledge that his opportunity in life had passed away was recurring to him, as it often did, in a long gallery of pictures, in each of which he formed the central figure. How happy had that boy Charles Woodford been, to die so young! Thrice did Mr Murphy address the doctor ere he began to hear his words.

'Warton, Warton! see, the last pair is coming on, and you will miss, in your brown-study, the prettiest bit of wrestling that to-day has had to shew. George Adams is left alone with Ripson. You were talking about angels a while ago, and if ever a young soldier deserved to be in the Light Company, and wear wings— See what a frank expression he has, and how it contrasts with Miles's scowl! Not that there is much love lost between them, but?'

'Hush, sir, hush!' cried the old wrestler peremptorily; 'don't you see they have got "holt"?'

And in truth the two young men, discarding all the feints and subtleties which they had not scrupled to use with their previous competitors, had at once grappled with one another, and were already contending for the fall. The two Umpires were walking slowly round them, and followed with their eyes their every movement; but the spectators watched them with scarcely less of keenness, it being the struggle for the belt, which would be decided by the best out of three falls. With every muscle at fullest stretch, and their veins starting out upon their brows, the two young athletes stood, first shoulder to shoulder, then

head to head, as the circle of their arms shifted upwards, then whirled on a sudden so rapidly round, that one could scarcely distinguish one from the other, till at last both came to earth with a thud—Miles Ripson uppermost.

'Pretty, pretty!' exclaimed the old wrestler approvingly: 'that's the old sort that used to be when I was a boy.'

'I am very sorry for George,' observed Mr Murphy gloomily; 'I am afraid he is overmatched.'

'Bonnie Georgie, bonnie Georgie,' cried many a voice, but it was rather in the tone of pity than of encouragement. His popularity, although he was a stranger, was greater than that of his rival; but the wrestling ring affords that 'fair field and no favour' so much desired, though so seldom found, its plaudits are very properly reserved for him and all who has proved himself the best man.

George Adams took not the slightest notice of these well-meant signs of favour, but with his fine face very pale and still, walked slowly towards the centre of the ring to meet his antagonist.

Miles Ripson, on the other hand, with a flush of triumph on his dark face, stepped swiftly forward, and placed his arms about the other, as though they were the garland of some victim doomed to the sacrifice.

'He is making too sure,' muttered the old wrestler: 'yon lad is not to be trifled with.—There, see, he has too high a holt. Yes, a holt, a holt!' cried he, in corroboration of the umpires' decision, to which Miles Ripson's voiceless lips had appealed in vain. 'Bonnie Georgie, bonnie Georgie, if Miles does get out of that, I shall almost like the fellow.'

But although Ripson acquitted himself exceedingly well in the disadvantageous position in which his own rashness had placed him, his mistake was a fatal one. After a close and trying struggle, in which neither seemed to leave his foothold, but to grow out of the very ground, like embracing trees, Miles was lifted into the air, and (notwithstanding that his less powerful opponent staggered under the burden) deposited like a sack, which is too heavy for its bearer, upon the trampled earth.

A great shout broke forth from all present; not because Miles was thrown, but because his defeat was mainly attributable to a neglect of that excessive caution which had gained him already more than one victory. His system had hitherto been to weary out his opponents by feeling for a hold, but never to grasp his fingers until he had obtained so superior a grappling-place as almost insured his success. His passionate antipathy to the young Sapper had prevented him from practising his usual caution with him, or perhaps the result of the last encounter had rendered him too confident in his own powers. 'There is a third fall yet!' muttered he between his teeth, as he rose uninjured from the earth.

'Yes, there is,' returned the young soldier quietly. 'Let us get it over.'

But Miles Ripson was no longer in a hurry. George waited for him, until cries arose of 'Time, Time!' all round the ring, and when he came forth at last, he stooped, and took up earth in his hands, as though he were washing them, in order to gain the firmer hold.

'You will grip fast enough without that, Ripson,' said George good-humouredly, for his own fingers were twitching nervously enough, and longing to clasp his foe.

'Stop!' cried the umpires—'stop!' as the pair

began making those circular mesmeric passes over each other's shoulders peculiar to the northern mode of wrestling. 'You have forgotten to shake hands.'

'We will shake hands when we get our holt,' answered Miles grimly. 'We are not so fond of one another, we two.'

Round and round walk the umpires, until their eyes grow weary with watching, and still the two young men stand like graven images except for the shifting hands thrown outward behind each other now and again, to certify that they have taken no hold. As each chin rests upon the other's shoulder in that unloving embrace, it is strange to mark the set resolve in the firm lips, the nervous twitching of the nostrils, and the vigilance of the anxious eyes. 'Take care, take care, Bonnie Georgie; he is tiring you out,' cried Claude Murphy.

'Whist, whist,' returned the ancient athlete; 'dinna fash yourself. The chiel kens that weel enough for hissel.'

At which there was a burst of laughter, followed by a roar of excitement and admiration: 'They have holt—they have holt!' So narrowly was every movement watched by the spectators, that they perceived when the fingers met with meaning and not in feint, as immediately as the umpires themselves. And in a moment the two almost motionless figures began to writhe and strain like a couple of fierce-eyed snakes, whose power lies in their folds. Then, again, as though turned to stone, they once more stood, but this time in a position from which there could be no change for one of them at least, and probably for both, save when they should kiss mother-earth. Ripson had wound his right leg round his rival's left, and was bending his slender body backward by the whole weight of his own. Adams, after an ineffectual attempt to bear him back, submitted to this burden, which he knew was by no means *resting* itself, as sturdily as he could for a few seconds, albeit the perspiration stood upon his brow with the pain as much as with the strain: then feeling Miles's leg-clasp relax, he knew that his moment had arrived, and mustering his little remaining strength, he swung himself swiftly round, to fall indeed, and with crushing force, but to fall with his rival under him!

ENGLISH DEER-PARKS.

THERE is no doubt that at the period when that cruel prince bore sway 'who loved the tall deer as though he had been their father,' and long before his time, and long afterwards, the parks of England were too many, and the existence of the rights and privileges of their owners a great public wrong. So lately as the early part of the sixteenth century, a writer of that period tells us: 'In every shyre of England there is great plenty of Parkes, whereof some here and there appertene unto the Prince, the rest unto such of the nobility and gentlemen as have their lands and patrimony lying neere unto the same. . . . In Kent and Sussex only, they are to the number of a hundred, wherein great plenty of fallowe Deere is cherished and kept. . . . The circuit of these enclosures containe ofttimes a walke of foure or fyve myles, whereby it is to be seene what store of ground is employed upon that vayne commoditie which bringeth no manner of gaine or profit to the owner, but maintained only for his pleasure, to the no

small decay of husbandry, and diminution of mankind.' This author even proceeds to state that 'the twentieth parte of the realme is employed upon Deere and Conies already,' and yet that the rich are still desirous to enlarge 'these barren groundes.' In Saxton's maps, engraved in 1575, upwards of seven hundred parks are to be found, notwithstanding that a great number of places had been, within the memory of man, *disparked*, the owners of which, in the quaint language of the chronicler, had 'made there deere leap over the pale to give the bullockes place.' Mayson, in his *Itinerary*, 1617, confirms this; 'there be more parks in England than in all Europe beside,' says he; and again, 'there is no countrie wherein the gentlemen and lords have so many and large parkes only reserved for the pleasure of hunting. . . . The kinge's forestes have innumerable heards of red deere, and all parts have such plenty of fallow deere, as every gentleman of five hundreth or a thousand pounds rent by the yeere hath a park for them enclosed with poles of wood for two or three miles compasse.'

At the present time, as Mr Evelyn Philip Shirley informs us in his late interesting account of *English Deer-parks*, there are still three hundred and thirty-four parks, stocked with deer, in England, in thirty-one of which red deer are kept. And not many of us will wish them fewer. No man, indeed, would now desire to enclose a vast area of beautiful woodland with a high stone wall, and keep his fellow-creatures from so much as looking at it; or, if he would, the sooner such people and their places are done away with the better; but there is something so characteristically national about deer-parks, that they are regarded with favour even by the greatest radicals and utilitarians. It is scarcely possible for an Englishman to visit Windsor Park, open at all seasons to all men, and not feel a pride in the sublime demesne that appertains to his Chief Magistrate, and of which no other nation can shew the equal. To wander in that leafy solitude, so admirably kept, and yet so nobly wild, is a sensation that Londoners, at least, who are now brought so near to it, would be very sorry to forego; and to bring it into cultivation would be indeed a wretched economy. We agree with Mr Shirley (and with Washington Irving before him), that all parks should be encircled, like that of Windsor, with a paling, and not a wall, so that the passing traveller may peep at the beauties which lie within it, and also that a public footpath should run across all parks of any extent, so that so fair prospects may not be selfishly wasted on a few pair of eyes. The Saxon parks all lay open; the practice of enclosing these enormous tracts being due to the great Norman lords; and the forests of the French nobility, even at the time of the Revolution, were uniformly without enclosures.

It is difficult, says Mr Shirley, to decide which is the oldest existing deer-park in England; but it is certainly not Woodstock, as is popularly believed: if Lord Abergavenny's park at Eridge, in Sussex, may be identified, as seems probable, with the *Reredfelle* of Domesday, there is no doubt that it may lay claim to this unique distinction, there being no other Domesday park which appears in the category of existing enclosures stocked with deer. As to extent, with the exception of the royal park at Windsor, of about 2600 acres, Lord Egerton of Tatton's Park, containing 2500 acres, is the largest in this country, though Blenheim,

Richmond, Eastwell in Kent, Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire, Thoresby in Nottinghamshire, and Lord Derby's park at Knowsley, nearly approach it in size.

Beside the parks mentioned in Domesday, many of which, for extent, were forests, there is frequent allusion to 'hayes'—enclosures rather for entrapping deer (as elephants are entrapped in India) out of the larger preserves, than for permanent occupation. But these land stew-ponds, as we may call them, were not more religiously looked after and jealously guarded than the parks themselves, in all of which the Norman Conqueror assumed the right of hunting, and forbade even the persons who owned them to indulge in that pastime without his special leave. So late as the ninth year of Edward III., the permission to hunt in a royal forest was considered the highest honour that could be bestowed on a subject; and even the right of taking vermin therein was made the subject of special grant: thus, 'John de Beverle and the heirs-male of his body were permitted by Edward III. to hunt vermin with dogs in the forests, chases, parks, and warrens of the king, and to use a certain horn of divers colours—viz., russet and black—which the king had given to him as a sign.' Mr Earle, in his recent edition of the Saxon Chronicle, has well described the hunting of those early times: 'Now a days,' he says, 'men hunt for exercise and sport, but then they hunted for food, or for the luxury of fresh meat. Now, the flight of the beast is the condition of a good hunt, but in those days it entailed disappointment. They had neither the means of giving chase nor of killing at a distance, so they used stratagem to bring the game within reach of their missiles. A labyrinth of alleys was penned out at a convenient part of the wood, and here the archers lay under covert. The hunt began by sending men round to break and beat the wood, and drive the game with dogs and horns into the ambuscade or *haia* (haye). Horns were used not, as with us, to call the dogs, or as in France, to signal the stray sportsman, but to scare the game. In fact, it was the *battue*, which is now, under altered circumstances, discountenanced by the authorities of the chase, but which, in early times, was the only way for man to cope with the beasts of the field.'

A large proportion of our ancient parks were for the especial use of the bishops and dignified clergy, who, while they were forbidden by the canon *de clerico venatore* to hunt with dogs or hawks for the sake of pleasure, were permitted to do so for the sake of recreation (something not very different) or of health.

In a very interesting manuscript roll, containing the accounts of Richard Chambyr, park-keeper of Framlingham, in Suffolk, June 1515 to 1518 (at that time belonging to the Duke of Norfolk), we learn that the inferior clergy were as fond of hunting as the bishops; for under the head of *Lossys thys Somer*, and among items of deer 'ded of the wyppys,' we read: 'Item on holy rood evyn I found in the parke St Iohan bowse parysch pryst of tanyngton with hys bow bent and an arrow in yt betyng at the herd.' The amount of 'bukes' set down in this roll as having been sent as presents to abbots and priors is very considerable, and, we daresay, must have wrung Mr Richard Chambyr's hys heart. He was very particular in his accounts, it seems, and if his spelling was a little queer, everybody's spelling was at that epoch. 'Item my lord curson was her

and kylled a buk and a sowrell, and I gave the sowrell [a male deer of the third year] to lord curson's seruantis, and Sr rychard Wentforthys seruantis.' Beside these pestilent strangers who are always getting leave for a day's sport in His Grace's park, and to carry away what they kill, there are presents to be made upon particular occasions. 'Item Sir Iohan Rows for syngynge of his fyrst messe' [could this possibly be identical—our spelling being so variable—with that reverend bowse already found in another sort of mess?], 'one bucke.' Item George Baker for his mariage, one bucke.' But if Mr Chambyr grudged his game, just as our gardeners grudge their peaches, to his lord's friends and dependents, he much more grudged it to poachers.

'On the thouris day after mycholmes daye at night I toke the persone of Ketylweris brege in the parke.'

Another learned clerk, it will be perceived (for 'persone' is parson), after forbidden game.

'Item Iohan pulsham thelder cam rydyng be the wey and found a do without and hys doge kyllid her and he hyng hys dog.'

The least he could do, surely: he might think himself lucky he was not hung himself.

Also, 'on scynt markys daye Iohan foxe and yonge thomas hyllys, laddys, and wiilliam tendyclone, they went futh to the relieffing' [here Mr C. becomes unintelligible in his extreme indignation] 'of the hare and had a sowre, and brout hyr in to the parke and kyllid a do with faune and a nother faune.'

The servants of the abbot of Bery commit, though unwittingly, the same atrocious crime, 'at which I toke up their doge in the parke and keppeyd hym, but they made labor to Sir William Rowces for the doge and I delueryde the doge to him.' 'Item the munday afore mychaelmes daye cam in a dogge of Iohnsons of denyngtone, the schoe maker, and killed ij dooes, and there the dogge was take up, and I sende to hym to wete wether he wold have the dogge agayne and he sende me word naye, and then I hyngde hym upon a tre.'

How natural and characteristic all this reads! One can scarcely imagine that honest Richard Chambyr, and 'my lord cardenall,' for whom he was 'signed to kyll xij bukkye,' and those daring poachers who 'toke a corse at a sowrell and kyllid hym' under his very eyes, have all been as dead as Iohnson's dogge three centuries ago!

Buck-hunting in parks was exceedingly fashionable during the Elizabethan period, and many of the nobility seem to have done nothing else. Thus, of Henry Lord Berkeley it is recorded that, in the month of July 1559, 'he came with his wife and family to Callowden his house by Coventry, when the first work done was the sending for his buckhounds to Yate in Gloucestershire; his hounds being come, away goeth he and his wife a progress of buck-hunting to the parks of Berkeswell, Gody, Bradgate, Leicester Forest, Tiley, and others on this side his house; and after a small repose, then the parks of Kenelworth, Astley, Wedgnoock, and others on the other side of his house, and this was the course of this lord, more or less, for the thirty next summers at least.' Noble ladies were almost as fond of this sport as their lords, and in particular the queen herself, who came down to this very Lord Berkeley's park in his absence, and saw 'twenty-seven stagges slain in the toyles, and as many others were stolen and

havocked;' which so incensed his game-preserving lordship that he 'sodainly and passionately dis-parked that ground;' whereupon the Virgin Queen having heard of it, sent him warning to keep a wary watch over his words and actions, for that the Lord Leicester had caused the slaughter, and had a plot against his head and castle, to the latter of which he had 'taken no small likeage.' At Cowdray, in Sussex, the queen having had delivered to her 'a crossbowe by a nymph, with a sweet song,' shot several deer with her own royal hands; and from a turret in the evening saw 'sixteen buckes, all having fayre lawe, pulled downe with grey-houndes in a lawnd.'

James I., who is said to have introduced from Norway the dark-brown variety of fallow-deer, was very fond of hunting after a certain Cockney fashion. He did not pay any attention to the proper times of year, but even in the month of April, on his journey from Scotland to take possession of the English throne, we read that, being at Widdrington Castle, in Northumberland, 'the deere in the parke being so faire before him, he could not forbear, but according to his wonted manner, he went and slew two of them; which done, he returned with a good appetite to the house, where he was most royally feasted and blanketed.' Yet this monarch, who could put no decent restraint upon himself in this matter, thus speaks—in a proclamation 'of the severitie we intend to use hereafter' against poachers—of the desire for sport in persons of humbler station: 'We are not ignorant,' says he, 'that there are some passions in men's mindes so strong, as hard it is but they will breake forth at times beyond the bounds of reason, where commoditie, pleasure, or revenge provoketh; but this offence being a trespassing against reason which hath no end to it, whereof can redound to the offender neither profit or pleasure, honour or other recompence; we cannot interpret that the transgressions that are done therein do proceed, but either out of a barbarous and uncivill disposition, not fit to be suffered in an ordered Estate, or out of an insolent humour and unrespective to our person, not to be endured;' which views of the royal Dogberry are held by some folks even to this day.

During 'the distractions' of Charles I.'s reign, the deer in England much decreased, so that after the Restoration they were imported from Germany and elsewhere to replenish Windsor and Sherwood Forests. Warrants were also issued to take the deer from the parks of those nobles who had espoused the cause of the Commonwealth, and place them in the royal park, and seventeen hundred pounds was paid to the 'Masters of the Toils' for this larcenous service. In the early part of the eighteenth century, however, buck-hunting became once more so common a pastime, that even the judges on circuit engaged in it in the evenings. About this time, the fashion was introduced of having paddocks of deer near the mansion—whereas formerly the parks were always at a distance, and occupied the worst and wildest parts of the manor—of which a well-known example is afforded in the grounds of Magdalen College at Oxford.

From the date of the Restoration, licenses for imparking gradually became obsolete (though it is still laid down in the law-books that none can make a chase or park without the king's license), and it is probable that a large proportion of the present parks have been impaled since the beginning

of last century, and although for many years gradually decreasing, occasionally new ones are enclosed and old ones restored. Maryburne Park, now called Regent Park, was thrown open during the Commonwealth, and was never afterwards restored; but 'in St James's Park,' says Evelyn in 1665, 'there are deer of several countries—white, spotted like leopards, antelopes, an elk, red deer, roebucks, stags.' Deer, too, are represented in Kip's view of St James's Palace, in 1714, in the park beyond the Mall. The deer in Hyde Park remained there until 1831, when they were removed, 'in consequence of the number of pet dogs which were shot by the keeper, and which occasioned a great many complaints.' Otlands Park, near Weybridge, well known to Londoners, was the scene of that famous exploit of John Selwyn, its keeper, which is commemorated in Walton Church, where he is represented riding on a stag. He was famous for his skill in horsemanship, and when Queen Elizabeth was watching the chase, he suddenly leaped from his horse upon the back of the stag, both running at the time at their utmost speed, and not only kept his seat, 'but drawing his sword, and coming near the queen, plunged it into his throat [i.e. the stag's], so that the animal fell dead at her feet.'

Greenwich Park was founded in Henry VI's reign (1433), by Humphry, Duke of Gloucester. Hentzner, in his *Travels* in 1598, speaks of it as the Queen's Park, well stocked with deer; 'in the middle whereof is an old square tower called Mirelevr, supposed to be that mentioned in the romance of *Amadis de Gaul*, and joining to it a plain' [Blackheath?], 'where knights and other gentlemen used to meet at set times and holidays to exercise on horseback.'

Windsor Park is not mentioned in any state-paper, or otherwise, until the thirty-first year of Henry III. What is now called the Home Park was added by Edward IV., and was the scene of the hunting by Henry VII. and Philip, king of Castile. In Queen Anne's time, there were four thousand head of deer kept up at Windsor, but at the present day there are but eighteen hundred. Mr Shirley does not enter into much detail concerning this park, on account of the exhaustive history of it lately published by Mr Menzies.

By far the largest English park in Elizabethan times was that of Kenilworth, the circuit of which was said to be twenty miles; the charge bestowed on it and the castle by Leicester the owner, was computed at sixty thousand pounds.

Of southern deer-parks, that of Eastwell in Kent, will probably be held to be the most remarkable for varied beauty. The present park contains two thousand three hundred acres, of stiff clay, of loams upon chalk, and of chalk down, which diversity of soil and pasturage makes Eastwell venison unusually fine. The fern, too, flourishes here in great luxuriance in a wood of gigantic beeches cut into eight avenues, and known as 'the Star Walk.' So high does the fern grow, that it completely conceals the fallow-deer, which can only be traced by their bounds. There is also a breed of powerful greyhounds peculiar to this noble domain, used for catching the deer after the rutting season.

Chartley in Staffordshire, Lyme in Cheshire, and Chillingham in Northumberland, are the only three parks through which it is advisable *not* to have a public footpath, for they all harbour a

particular, but by no means inoffensive breed of wild cattle. These are all of cream colour; but the ears of the Chartley ones are tipped with black, whereas the cattle in the other two parks have red ears. It is the opinion of Professor Owen that these are descended from domestic cattle introduced by the Romans, which subsequently became half wild from breeding together for many years in an unreclaimed state, just as the numerous herds in South America owe their origin to the tame ones originally imported into that country by Europeans.

In Lyme, there used to be observed a curious custom of driving the red deer round the park about Midsummer, collecting them in a body before the house, and then swimming them through a pool of water. But this art of driving deer like ordinary cattle is very difficult. Joseph Watson, however, keeper of this last-named park in Queen Anne's reign, undertook, at his master's bidding, to drive twelve brace of stags from Lyme to Windsor, for a wager of five hundred guineas; which he performed accordingly. In Playford's *Introduction to Music*, there is also mentioned a very curious example of this dexterous art. 'Travelling some years since, I met on the road near Royston a herd of about twenty bucks following a bagpipe and violin, which while the music played went forward, when it ceased they all stood still; and in this manner they were brought from Yorkshire to Hampton Court.'

JED SMITH'S STRANGE ADVENTURE.

'BEFORE I'd let any man hurt even an eyebrow of the constitooshun, I'd blow darned old Virginia herself sky high, and no two words about it,' said Jed Smith, a young orderly sergeant in Colonel Joe Hooker's regiment of the Chicago Zouaves. 'But, I say, Josh Hudson, look alive with those three Roman punches, partner; there's the brigadier-general been waiting more than half-an-hour for that Catawba cobbler.'

'All right, Jed,' said the full private, who acted as deputy-harman to Jed Smith. 'I'm cutting the straws into lengths now; but still all I say is, that if old Hooker keeps our regiment many more months in this blessed Alleghany ridge, and don't let us fly at Jeff Davis, he isn't worth a red cent as a fighting-captain, whatever Abe may think of him.'

'Nonsense, Josh! Aren't we watching Jackson's detachment at Abingdon, and looking out for the reconnoitring-party with the two balloons that are trying to observe our troops round Blountsville and Tennessee way?'

Our scene is at the height of the late American war; our story opens in a half-ruined farmhouse, in the centre of Newbern, a devastated village, situated on a lofty table-land, covered with rich pastures, and at the foot of Walker's Mountain, at the northern end of the Blue Ridge, that spur of the Alleghany Mountains which, bisecting Virginia, presents a bold front to the Atlantic.

Jed Smith, a dashing, energetic, young Tuscaloosan, of a commercial turn of mind, having found that his company of Zouaves was likely to remain some time in Newbern, had improved the occasion by starting a liquor store, with a regular bar-room attached to it, for the sale of all the newest beverages, whether 'New Jersey Lightning,' 'Stone Fences,' 'Cocktails,' 'Peach and Honey,'

'Juleps,' or 'Corpse Revivers;' and the speculation had answered.

Jed Smith was a universal favourite with the picket, for he was the most reckless, dashing, generous, smart fellow in the regiment, and had a wonderful way of humouring the stern captain, and escaping a court-martial, even when his foraging escapades were discovered. A little too fond of cards and whisky was Jed; a little addicted to bragging and loud talk, but otherwise a quick, ready fellow, trustworthy and brave as one of Arthur's knights.

When I say the bar answered, I mean rather it would have answered had not the proprietor been heedless of money, and generous as a prince, and always surrounded by a set of idle, jovial, amusing, good-for-nothing sponges and rascallions, who drank away all the profits. Foremost among these was his partner, that fat-headed and thirstiest of souls, Josh Hudson.

There he stood now, his blue Zouave jacket unbuttoned, his stock off, and using a bayonet to twist back the wire of a soda-water bottle, for some gin sling, loudly called for from an inner room; while Jed Smith could be seen through the doorway standing in an excited way, like an insane juggler, with a huge tin cup in either hand, and tossing the gin from one into the other, in a high liquid arch, like a one-coloured rainbow; while a thin, sallow Kentucky corporal, with one eye, leaned back on a rocking-chair, and watched him benevolently, as he chewed, spat, and sang by turns.

Every room in that windowless, dilapidated house, with the star-spangled blue flag over the door, was full of soldiers, drinking, smoking, or playing at 'Bumble-puppy;' for the colonel was away at 'the Springs,' and Captain Murphy was a good, jovial officer, but no disciplinarian, and was out looking for panther on Clench Mountain, a neighbouring ridge of the Alleghanies. In times of compulsory idleness, the best soldier soon forgets the main object of his profession. A noisier, wilder, friskier set than now filled Jed Smith's bar-room at Newbern, never sipped whisky or roared out camp-songs.

Josh Hudson having pounded some ice, started one of Newell's anti-Southern songs, from the *New York Sunday Mercury*:

'Neath a ragged palmetto, a Southerner sat,
A-twisting the band of his Panama hat,
Clacking the lash of his slave-driving whip,
Cocking his rifle, and biting his lip.

CHORUS.

Oh! for a shot at old Greeley and Beecher;
Oh! for a crack at a Yankee school-teacher;
Oh! for a captain, and oh! for a ship;
Oh! for a cargo of niggers each trip.

This was too much, even for Jed Smith's patience. Out he burst like Apollo from a cloud—his shirt-sleeves rolled up, and a bottle of peach-brandy in his hand.

'Why, you all fired old sloth! are you not going to get that drink ready for the drum-major before the year nineteen hundred? Come, where's that julep for Major Johnson? It was ordered an hour ago by the clock that ought to be over that mantel-piece. 'Pon my word, I'll bleed you, Josh, if you don't get smarter. You're too fat for campaigning, Josh.—Have you boys seen this last skit of Orpheus C. Kerr's?'

'No!' cried several voices. 'Read it.'

The handsome face of Jed Smith glowed with pleasure as he sat down at the bar-counter, and resting his feet on the top-rail of a chair, began; his mischievous, wild, restless eyes bright with mischief, and Monongahela whisky, and read the last paper of the satirist of the war.

It was a clever skit on the sluggishness of Mr Wells and the Naval Board, and described humorously the trial of new rifled cannon. The first gun tried was Joriks's double back-action revolving cannon, for ferry-boats. It consists of a heavy bronze tube, revolving on a pivot, with both ends open, and a touch-hole in the middle. While one gunner puts in a load at one end, another puts in a load at the other end, and one touch-hole serves for both. Upon applying the match, the gun is whirled swiftly round on a pivot, and both balls fly out in circles, causing great slaughter on both sides. The gunner, being the father of a large family, refused to apply the match. The government was satisfied without firing, and ordered six of the guns, at a million dollars apiece—to be furnished in time for the next war.

This bit of satirical fun at a dilatory government was enthusiastically received. The Chicago Zouaves were eager for fighting, and chafed at their long delay in the mountain picket.

'Look here, boys; I'll shout this time, and let it be, "Git things round,"' said Hudson, Jed Smith's phlegmatic partner. 'Come, let's liquor, Jed; you're always shouting; now let me have a turn. We shall have the captain back soon from Clench Mountain. It is my opinion he'll try that once too often; he'll go out looking for catamounts, and catch a Tartar.'

'Get out with you, Josh,' said Jed Smith the reckless, as sitting on a table near a latticed window, through which fell the clear golden light of an autumn sunset, which gilded his hearty face and the cards that he flung over his head in a coloured arch, with a dexterity worthy of a professional juggler.

'Pass the ice, Jed,' said Hoffman the German; 'I like the ice better than the red-hot visky.'

Jed Smith had just raised the large bowl that brimmed with glittering ice-blocks, when the sound of a bugle, followed by a musket-shot, rang down the long street of the half-deserted village.

'Jeff. Davis is on us,' shouted the one-eyed Kentuckian.

'The darned rebs. have snapped us; yes, sir, they are on us,' cried Jed Smith, running for his rifle, and slinging on his broad sword-bayonet.

Down went chairs and tables; glasses were broken; spoons fell clattering on the brick floor; the drummer in a moment caught up his drum, the others their weapons; the German spluttered High-Dutch oaths. If the reader has seen a nest of ants stirred up by a stick, or a den of monkeys when the keeper enters it, he may imagine the hurry, noise, and confusion of that moment.

All at once, the door burst open and slammed back, and in rushed a Vermont-man, his rifle in his hand, and in the other waving a dirty table-cloth.

'The rebs, the Seceshers are on us!' he cried. 'You can see the butter-nut coats now moving round by the Court-house. I was with the sentinels at the time. We were just going to fire on them, when they hung out a white flag for a parley, and wanted to see our captain.—What shall

I tell 'em, Jed—that Murphy's away on Clench Mountain?

Jed Smith's blood sprang into his eyes as he leaped forward, and seized the Vermont-man by his collar.

'Not for your life!' he said. 'You born moon-calf, don't say a word about our full strength. Come out, and let me parley with them. Leave it to me to make the Seceshers think Joe Hooker's close by with half his brigade.—Come, boys; follow me as close as if I'd cried: "Come, boys, and have a drink."'

Out hurried the Zouaves in a stormy pell-mell, bayonets fixed, and ripe for mischief. There were the men in the dirty yellow uniform, some dozen of them, advancing two deep; no doubt, the head of a column not yet emerged from the woods.

'Snash 'em up, Jed, as you would ice for a cobbler,' said Josh Hudson, who was, like Kleber, terrible when he awoke from his phlegmatic torpor. 'Knock their heads off before the rest of the rebs. can get clear from Laurel Gap.'

'What! and turn murderer, and violate all the rules of war? Don't you see the flag of truce flying? Fie! Josh. You learned that among the Mexicans or Comanches, perhaps; but it won't do here. We're a rough lot, Josh; but still we ain't butchers.'

Jed Smith seemed a new man in this sudden emergency. There was the making of a hero, after all, in that young Tuscaloosan bear-hunter. He was braced for that crisis, and had thrown behind him in a moment the low vices that collect round a soldier in idleness. The rebs. might outnumber the small outpost, but the Seceshers at the head of the attack were certainly by no means to be envied.

Jed seized the Vermont-man's impromptu flag, tied it to the end of his rifle, and advanced to meet the rebel advance-guard, for the bearer of the Seceshers' white flag was now approaching the throng of Zouaves.

Down went every Federal bayonet. The drum beat angrily; the Zouaves were all for instant fighting, and fretted, and cursed, and eddied round Jed.

'Back! back!' he cried. 'We'll shew fair-play even to rebs.'

'But not to rattlesnakes, Jed.'

'You be quiet, Josh, and obey your officer, or I'll report you, though you are my partner.'

Three men in the butter-nut uniform, the foremost a captain, advanced to meet Jed Smith, muffled up in their greatcoats, their shakos pulled down very low over their eyes.

Jed stepped forward with a gravity that had never before been observed in him. He might have been an admiral about to receive a bundle of surrendered swords.

To his indignation and surprise, a volley of laughter burst from the supposed rebel ranks. The foremost of them threw off their butter-nut coats, and disclosed the blue and yellow Zouave uniforms. They were only Federals in disguise, and the leader was Captain Murphy himself, redder than ever, thirstier than ever, and almost bursting with suppressed laughter, which now came forth in volleys.

'Why, Jed,' he said—'why, Jed, old man, what! I caught you, did I? you gin-sling selling old hoss! And this is what I call an eternal and well-conducted surprise of a Federal outpost. You're the sort of man, you are, to vote six times for the

Democratic candidate; and you've been having high times here, I expect, and haven't, perhaps, heard that Jeff. Davis is about two minutes' walk from the Capitol.—I say, bhoys, did you ever see a Federal sergeant ever look so much like a Tennessee horse-stealer, when Judge Lynch's jury begin to look up aloft for a good strong branch against the sky-line.—Now, then, peach and honey all round, Jed.'

Jed took off his rusty foraging-cap, and rubbed his crisp curls in a half-laughing, half-vexed way. 'Well, captain,' he said, 'I guess this time you had the pull of us pretty considerably; but I'll just tell you we're going to have a trigger or two pulled about it, and there'd have been a muster, for I'd got the boys well together at the bar, and there wasn't one that wasn't primed.'

'And where have you been, captain, after all?' shouted Josh Hudson. 'Seed any catamounts 'bout Laurel Gap? Seen anything of the balloon party?'

'Not a ha'porth; we've been all round,' said the captain, who was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody, and cared much less for discipline than he did for foraging; 'and I don't believe a red cent of the whole story. There's no balloons—never was, that's my opinion; and the whole thing's a trick of Joe Hooker, as an excuse to keep the Zouaves from getting the whole glory of the war, and taking Richmond single-handed.—Look alive, Josh, with those two dozen peach and honeys, and let the niggers broil us some steaks for supper, for we're hungry as bears in spring. Got any hoe-cakes? All we did was to make a reconnaissance on a farmhouse up over the Gap, and capture this bundle of butter-nut uniforms, and a copy of the *Richmond Mercury*, and half a pound of Oronoko. Been no rebs. there for the last month, not since Jackson threw up the works at Abingdon.'

'That balloon story is another of those reb. lies, then, captain?' said Jed Smith thoughtfully, cutting a fresh quid from a great rope of treacly tobacco.

'All lies, if I know a lie when I see it,' said the captain, who had by this time entered Jed's bar, and settled down for the night over a steak the size of a small door-mat. 'Hurry down with that peach and honey,' he kept shouting to Jed's bar-partner, 'or you'll find I'm some pumkins in a muss; yes, that's so.'

'No news of the colonel, Jed, I suppose?' said the captain's right-hand man.

'We shall see him here next spring, if the trees are early,' said Jed with a knowing wink; 'so make your arrangements, boys, and liquor up in time.'

Now the fun grew louder, and the glasses went round quicker. Josh, convicted of drinking half the brandy that should have gone into the captain's tenth glass, was sentenced to be shot with champagne corks as a deserter. Down on his knees he went, before a line of Murphy's men, each armed with a champagne bottle, the cork ready to start. The captain, mounted on the table, had already shouted the orders, 'Make ready—present,' and was about to roar 'Fire!' when there came a clatter of horses' hoofs up the village street, and the next moment the door was flung open, and a thin, stern man, with a travel-stained and dusty uniform, strode into the room, followed by some half-dozen officers.

It was the colonel, Joe Hooker, his eyes flashing with the rage of an outraged disciplinarian, as, with his long cavalry sword, he contemptuously swept some half-dozen tumbler from the table.

'As I thought, Captain Murphy,' he said, turning sharp on that obfuscated officer. 'I know how our outposts are so often surprised. I find demoralised men, and a shameless want of discipline. A few such regiments, and we should have Jeff. Davis in the Capitol in a week.—Captain Murphy, have you captured this balloon reconnoitring-party from Stanton, by the other side of the mountain—what's its name?'

'Walker's Mountain, colonel,' said Jed Smith promptly, much to the relief of the overwhelmed Murphy. 'A party of us has just been told out to look for the rebs, and the balloon round Stanton, and Captain Murphy has appointed me to command the party.'

Ingenious Jed! The fiction was great, and most reprehensible; but Jed had a scheme in view to serve his captain's reputation, and earn distinction for himself. He had always secretly believed in the balloon story, and he now saw that there was an opening for an adventure, and that the captain dared not betray him, or stop his proposed foray.

The colonel looked round sternly, but his face softened when he turned and saw the fine alert young fellow who stood before him at the salute, lithe, ready, and with frank, bold eyes that looked straight and fearlessly at him.

'This matter is of great importance to our right wing,' said the colonel sternly, and between his teeth, for he was vexed. 'It requires great courage and skill too; for if we miss the fellows, Jackson's next move will endanger our position in Tennessee—mind that, young man.—Murphy, I think you've got the right man here; he's a Tuscaloosans, I see, and I like Tuscaloosans; they're the right grit.—When shall you be ready, sergeant?'

'I'm ready now, colonel.'

'That's right. Keep your eyes open.—Come, gentlemen, we'll go into the inner room, and arrange the advance for to-morrow.—Captain Murphy, have this room made decent, and set sentinels, and double the pickets at once, for fear of a surprise; the enemy is not far off.—Come, gentlemen.'

'Jed,' said Murphy, as the colonel left the room—he pressed Jed's hand ruefully as he spoke—'these men have never had much morals; and now they've come to be demoralised, they haven't any. There's not a man as sponges on me that would have done for me what you've done. Let's liquor. What shall it be? Take a hand at old sledge?—Here, Josh.'

'Captain,' replied Jed, 'it wasn't all for you I did it, and that's something to the creditor side; and as for liquor, I never touch any when I'm on real business, like poker, camp-preaching, or going in for a free fight. Now, I'll go and pick out my half-dozen fire-eaters; and I tell you, captain, if I don't give a good account of them two balloons, I'll just shave my head, and enter myself for the next asylum. Just so. Yes, I will.' He chose his companions, hardy, reckless, shrewd fellows: the German, the Boston-man, the one-eyed Kentuckian, the pioneer, the Vermont-man, and above all, fat, lazy, faithful Josh Hudson, whose sense was not to be despised, if you only gave it time.

'It was rather bad the colonel snapping us, boys,' said Jed to his picked volunteers; 'but we'll try and pull through and astonish the rebs, and

save the captain's credit; but we must be sharp as 'coons that have escaped from the trap.—Come, Josh, man, get your rifle, for we won't wait, and so I tell you.'

'Jed is all alert now—what kinder man he is,' whispered Hoffman the German to the pioneer.

'No talking in the ranks!' shouted Jed; 'we must work silent as death; and if Josh puffs and blows, even when we're at the double, back he goes, mind, and finds his own way too. This is an important reconnoitre of ours, and perhaps involves the safety of the whole Federal army. We're in a tight place, if we miss this.'

Jed's very language seemed to have improved since his promotion to independent command. He spoke sharp, and looked roused and full of fighting.

'Jed means it,' whispered the Vermont-man to the Kentuckian, 'if any one ever meant it: look, how he presses his lips together.'

It was the morning after the reconnoitring-party had started for Laurel Gap, the principal pass of the Alleghany Mountains, that the men lay hid in ambuscade about half a mile from a farmhouse at the foot of the mountains, on the opposite side from Newbern, the outpost they had left. They were waiting for Jed, who, disguised in the rebel uniform, had insisted on himself venturing into the adjacent hamlet, in order, if possible, to obtain news of the balloon and the rebel reconnoiterers.

The men, crouched in a hazel-copse, half-buried in dead leaves—some dozing, others watching—waited with sullen impatience for Jed's return.

'Jed's been snapped, sure as snakes are snakes,' said the one-eyed Kentuckian, glowering through the leaves, and resting both his hands on his rifle-muzzle; 'and I'm for making a bee-line home.—I say, Josh, I think we may smoke now; the thing's all up.—Come, light up, bhoys, and let's pull foot back.'

Josh, who had been lying half asleep, with his greatcoat rolled in a bundle under his huge head, leaped up at these words. 'Why, you're never going to leave Jed,' he said, reddening with rage at the very thought—'you're never going to leave Jed, just because he's been an hour or two away, running into danger for us. You'll never leave him, boys, in the claws of these all-fired rebs; 'taint what I expected of you—that's a fact. No, you shan't do it!'

'And who are you, you fat old sea-porpoise, to stop men like us! What's your rifle, I should like to know, to our five!' said the Kentuckian, drawing out his sword-bayonet, and wiping it spitefully.

'Hunderd tausens devils! we didn't put on our uniform to be shot in a wood like bear-cubs,' growled the German.

'We are not Red Injuns,' muttered the pioneer, 'and we mean to keep on our scalps, Josh, and so we tell you. I value my haar more than all Jed's body—yes, sir, that's so.'

'If I was back at my farm,' said the Vermont-man, 'I'd no more touch a rifle again than I would a rattle-snake, no, siree.'

'I'd give a hundred V notes now, and not want a cent back,' said the Boston-man, 'to be back at my store in Lime Avenue;' and he pushed Josh out of the way, to make room for the rest; for Josh had placed himself as a sort of Leonidas, to guard a small Thermopylae between two ash-trees.

'All bunkum!' said the Kentuckian, whose one eye looked bloodshot and sinister; 'never was no

balloons.—I say, you Dutchman, give Josh a prog with your bayonet, if he doesn't move out of the way.

'As sure as old Abe's President, we'll fire into you,' shouted the pioneer. 'I take no more account, bhoys, of killing a fellow when he riles me, than I would of shooting a buck.—Now once, Josh, twice, and when I say three, I let go.'

The other mutineers gave a brutal laugh, for Josh, with bayonet fixed, stood in the gap at the charge, faithful and imperturbable.

'At all events, I can stop two of you,' said Josh coolly: 'lead for one, steel for the other—but I'll never desert Jed. Your firing will bring the rebs. on us, and you'll all be caught.'

There must have been mischief soon, for Josh held his heavy sword-bayonet threateningly forward, and four loaded rifles were already at the present, when there came a dash into the wood, and through the parting bushes leaped Jed Smith, sword in hand, and rifle slung at his back.

'Why, what's all this muss?' he cried. 'Is this a free fight? This isn't an Arkansas liquor-store—don't you think it. Look here; don't you touch Josh, not one of you. I'll cut off the first hand that touches his collar. I see it with half an eye, you wind-sills, you've begun to mutiny just because I was an hour longer than you expected. Why, you can't hurry these things, you riff-raff, you. Come, fall into line, and listen.'

The men, yielding to the old instinct of obedience, fell at once into line.

'Number!'

The men numbered.

'Shoulder arms! Ground arms!'

The men shouldered their rifles, and then grounded them.

'It was just a word or two, sergeant, with Josh,' said the Kentuckian, smiling deprecatingly at Jed. 'He was rather taking on himself, and it kinder set me up.'

'You take care it doesn't set the provost-marshal up,' said Jed between his teeth. 'You've been very near having a tight cravat once or twice before now, Walker.—Mind, the first man who disobeys orders, I shoot him down. Obey me, and all will go pleasant. So take your choice.'

'Any news of the balloons, Jed?' said Josh Hudson.

All eyes were strained to hear the sergeant's answer: most of them were incredulous.

'There! you are all staring like so many young alligators in hot weather. But it's all true. I've got all the news. Passed off as an orderly of Jackson's come with letters for the balloon-party. There are balloons—told you there was—two of them: one the rebs. call Richmond; and the other, Charleston. First is only a decoy; the other's the real one, and meant to top the Alleghanies, and watch Hooker and what he's doing. Decoy one's red; the other's blue. Got it all out of an old farmer down in the hollow beyond the village there to the left. They're at work now with the blue one in an opening two miles from here, up towards the Gap. We shall trap 'em if you attend to me, sure as eggs are eggs. I never did set eyes on an old man half as much a fool as that old farmer, with his 'tarnal talk about poultry and weaning calves. He just took to me. Ha! ha! 'tarnal old fool. He sent a boy to shew me the way! You hide till the boy comes up close, then a rifle at his ear will make him do anything.'

Jed knew human nature this far; the boy surprised, and his hands tied, was ready to lead them wherever they wished.

'Now then, boy, push on for Charleston, and shortest way, mind.'

'They started about two hours before you came to father's,' said the boy-guide; 'and you'll find them just starting, for they sent on the gas in barrels last night.'

'And where's the blue one?' said Jed. 'Where's Richmond?'

'Why, at Abingdon, mister, I s'pose,' said the boy. 'Here's the turning here, up by that second field.'

The boy pointed to a steep path running up towards Laurel Gap, and ending in a wood. It could be traced like a white ribbon along the lower slopes of the mountain.

An hour's sharp climbing brought Jed and his party to the edge of the wood on whose northern skirt the meadow was from which the reconnoitring balloon was to start.

'Five minutes from here,' said the boy in a low voice, as if afraid of being hurt, and looking intensely cunning with his pale, timid, restless eyes. Jed gave the order to sling rifles and creep in Indian file as they stole through the wood towards the meadow. Half-way he halted the men, and crept forward himself on his hands and knees. He came back in a few minutes, his handsome, reckless face flushed with triumph.

'Yes; all right, boys,' he cried; 'the rebs. are just letting go the ropes. She's ready to start, and the men are in. The moment they cut the ropes, give her a volley, right at the rebs. in the car.—Boy, don't snigger. It'll be bad for their relations, I tell yer.—Aim just over the seat of the car. There's only four going up, and I can't see their faces.'

Off darted Jed, followed by his men, now eager for the fun, and lay down, quietly dragging the boy with them, under shelter of some beech-trees and brambly undergrowth.

Yes, there at last was the balloon—a large blue globe, the Charleston one the boy had mentioned. There were large casks near it, which several soldiers in the rebel uniform were rolling back from beneath the car.

'Give it 'em now,' said the Kentuckian, putting his rifle to his shoulder.

'Not yet,' said Jed—'not yet; the wind is blowing this way, and we shall get a clean hit at it as it rises between us and the rebs.'

The huge unwieldy thing swayed and rocked in the wind, now freshening; then, as the ropes were cut, it slowly ascended. The soldiers below shouted and roared with unaccountable and irritating laughter.

Jed leaped up. 'Now, boys,' said he, 'sweep the decks.'

The men poured in a volley, and three out of the four aeronauts fell down dead into the car. A second discharge riddled the balloon, and sent it driving, a tattered mass of rags, before the wind, breaking itself to pieces against some tall fir-trees to the left. The fate of Charleston was sealed. As for the soldiers below, they threw down their arms, and fled at the first report.

One luckless aeronaut had fallen headlong in the meadow. Jed ran to see if there was any life in him. He ran before the rest, and they watched him stoop over the body. All at once he rose and burst into a storm of laughter.

'Why, boys, it's only a dummy after all,' he said—'a man like you see at the door of advertising clothes-shops. It was only the decoy balloon after all, and we've been tricked by this young 'coon of a boy. Where is he?—Josh, why didn't you keep a brighter look-out. The young thief's gone, as sure as Garrison's on the nigger platform!'

And so he was. During the excitement of the firing, he had slipped the handkerchief from his hands, and crept away through the bushes.

On dragging the torn mass of blue silk from the trees to which it clung, three more dummies, all pierced with bullets, were found prostrate in the car, their stupid waxen faces simpering, as if in triumph at Jed's disappointment.

'Well, a nice lot of gone fools we are,' he said, as he kicked the dummies in uniform all round the meadow. 'This'll be a nice story to tell old Joe. I only wish there was a clump of darned rebs. to charge on now, for there's a good deal of homicide about me just now. Like my luck, too, to get hold of the wrong balloon, while the other is perhaps up in the air just over Abingdon, like a kite over a poultry-yard, and safe out of reach, observing our line of operations. Cuss everything, and my tarnation luck especially! Cuss Richmond, and all cussed rebel tricks! I suppose they heard of our plans, and were sending up this bogus balloon, to make us think it was all over before they began to work Tennessee ways.'

'We'd better march home, Jed,' said Josh, looking to windward, 'for there's going to be a storm, sure as there's tobacco worth chewing in Maryland.'

'Well, I s'pose we must, Josh,' said Jed despondingly, as he struck his rifle but viciously against a broken cask. 'I s'pose such a trick was never put on a man before; and to think of that old 'coon smoking me.'

What a tramp back that file of tired and discomfited men had, plunging into valleys, clambering over rocks, forcing their way through thickets of thorn and laurel, leaping mountain-streams, in order to baffle pursuit, for Jed by this time felt sure that his approach had been observed, and he feared that his retreat might be cut off. The weather got worse too; great black clouds came rolling from the west, dark with concealed thunders. The air was heavy and oppressive with electric heat. The sky was of a lurid and ominous hue. A great storm seemed about to break over the Alleghanies, and the worst of it was, there was no house for Jed and his band to take shelter in.

They were now nearly at the top of the hostile side of the mountain, and after forcing their way through a thicket of hazel and holly, they suddenly found themselves on a small grassy plateau, not far from the summit.

Jed, resting to take breath, halted at an angle of the rock, and turned to take a survey of the ground he had traversed. Below him were the thick sloping woods, broken here and there by gray crags of projecting rock. Below, at the foot of the range, opened out the plain, dotted here and there by small villages, that seemed, as it were, the pickets of civilisation.

'There's my blessing on the rebs,' said Jed, shaking his fist at the distant houses, 'and much good may it do to the all-fired skunks!—But, hullo, Josh, are you in a fit?'

'Fit?' said Josh, looking up, and pointing at a dark red globular body just then floating over

the mountain-ridge from the opposite side, and hitherto unnoticed. 'Look there! May I be knocked off the muster-roll, if there isn't the red balloon after all!'

As Jed and his comrades looked up in astonishment, the balloon, as if its tenants were conscious of danger, rose swiftly into the air, almost out of shot, and down came showers of sand, that fell pattering on the leaves just above where the Federal soldiers stood.

'The rascal's standing off; give 'im a volley!'

shouted Jed. 'We may touch him; he isn't a quarter of a mile up.'

Crack, crack went the rifles, but all in vain: the balloon only rose more buoyantly and defiantly, and sailed slowly towards the friendly country. 'I only wish we could get a fair light under 'em,' said Jed; 'I'd lift them to the moon, or bring them down with a run as would spoil their appetite for that sort of eaves-dropping. We'll try the beggars again at the thousand-yard range. All together, boys: take good aim.'

Bang again went the rifles, but the only answer was a rebel shako thrown down, in token of contempt and defiance.

Jed looked up with a glance of bitter hatred at the balloon, now no larger than a tennis-ball. The storm was brewing darker and darker.

At that moment, a roar of thunder seemed to split the heaven and earth in two; an arrow of flame flashed from south to north; something like a burning torch struck the ground half-way down the mountain. When the lightning passed, and Jed and his half-scared men lifted up their eyes, the rebel balloon was gone. It had been struck by lightning, and not one of its crew had escaped. It lay a smouldering rag, half a mile off, among the dwarf-oaks and hazels. Beside it lay three charred, blackened objects, with no trace of humanity left. Those were the rebel spies.

'Well, I am sorry for the poor chaps; that's a fact,' said Jed, with considerable resignation, however, in the manner he leaned his chin on the muzzle of his rifle. 'It's bad for them boys, so it is; but in war-time we must take it as it comes, hot or cold: they got it hot. Come, boys, we'll pull over for Newbern, and tell the colonel.'

OLD AGE.

OLD Age, the evening of our life, the air
And sweet tranquillity of light, when Day
Hath laid his implements of toil away,
And the last breezes cool the brain from care;
So mayst Thou end! the silver twilight-star
Thy symbol high of happiness and peace,
Drawing more beauty as the sounds decrease
Between the dusk and Night's approaching car:
Thy well-proved arms to eager Youth resign;
They fit him well; the council-chair is thine.
The quiet smile within the clear blue eye;
The scarce, fine hair, that shines like morning frost,
If a long sunbeam chance to slant across;
The thin pale hand with azure tracery;
Venerable motions, and the frame by time
Hallowed and half-withdrawal from loud Life,
Like some cathedral gray with memories rife
In pillared aisles and walks of arching line:
These are the traits on which thy mellowed light
Rests ere it sets, to rise beyond the night.

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